



STATE OF WASHINGTON

HOME CARE QUALITY AUTHORITY

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April 2, 2009

Representative Frank Chopp
Speaker of the House
Washington State Legislature
339C Legislative Bldg.
PO Box 40600
Olympia, WA 98504-0600

Re: PSHB 1244 – 29% Budget Reduction for
Washington State Home Care Quality Authority (Agency 302)

Dear Speaker Chopp:

I am writing to you in the earnest hope that I might draw your attention to what is a very small budget item, but nevertheless has serious consequences for consumers of in-home care services, the workers who care for them, and the State of Washington. Specifically, PSHB 1244 sets forth a 29% reduction in our budget for the upcoming 2009-2011 biennium. Of even more concern to us is that we are directed to accomplish a large part of this reduction (\$545,000) by closing some of our Home Care Referral Registry sites.

A principal responsibility of the Home Care Quality Authority is to match and refer potential in-home care workers with consumers through a statewide Referral Registry. The Home Care Referral Registry (HCRR) is operated in registry site offices around the state through fourteen separate contracts.

This proposed reduction, while very small against the backdrop of the overall budget, will result in very direct, adverse, and unintended consequences:

- Deny access to the Referral Registry to consumers in up to 13 counties who would prefer to hire their own in-home care workers through the Registry. This will force consumers in the impacted counties to use home care agencies instead. While home care agencies do a fine job of providing services, they are more expensive for the state.
- Deny access to the Referral Registry to workers who are looking for employment and/or more hours as paid caregivers. Given the proposals that would reduce in-home care hours for consumers, many workers will be looking to the Registry to help them get more hours of work in order to maintain their health benefits. The very tool that would help to mitigate the impacts of fewer hours for workers will not be available to them in as many as 13 counties.

Representative Frank Chopp

April 2, 2009

Page 2

- Closure of three to four Registry sites. Although Registry services are also accessible by phone and via the web for consumers, closing Registries would remove the local area presence and prevent proper screening of prospective care providers through face to face interviews with Registry staff.
- Some consumers will face nursing home care as their only other option. The Referral Registry serves many consumers with complex behaviors and high care needs. Some of them have been turned away by home care agencies and the Registry is often the only place left for them to find in-home care providers.

The Home Care Referral Registry has been very successful in helping consumers find screened and qualified home care workers. The Registry has been fully operational since January of 2007 and has:

- Managed a system that has provided employment for more than 4,000 individual providers.
- Provided service to nearly 4,000 consumers of in-home care.
- Screened more than 20,000 worker applications for placement on the Registry.

Our Board and our small (4 FTE) staff truly understand the hard decisions you have to make in these very difficult economic times. We also understand that everyone needs to share in the responsibility to achieve the necessary budget reductions. To this end, we have been working tirelessly to identify programs and expenses that would achieve the reductions directed to us in both in the Governor's budget (13%) and the Senate's budget (14%). However, it is the additional 15% (\$545,000 GF-S) House budget reduction along with the resultant loss in Federal matching funds that most severely concerns us as outlined above.

On behalf of all consumers of in-home care services the Home Care Quality Authority Board respectfully requests that you reconsider this \$545,000 reduction of our biennial budget as directed by PSHB 1244.

Sincerely yours,



Elizabeth Brown
Chair



Rick Hall
Executive Director

cc Rep. Kelli Linville
Rep. Mark Ericks
Rep. Eric Pettigrew
Rep. Eileen Cody
Victor Moore
Marty Brown